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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [YM](#)  
SUBJECT: GPC MP CRITICIZES ROYG HANDLING OF SOUTHERN  
DISCONTENT

Classified By: Ambassador Stephen A. Seche for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

Summary

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¶1. (C) On January 13 a prominent member of Yemen's ruling party criticized his government's handling of demonstrations in Aden specifically and southern discontent in general. Earlier in the day, media reported that two Yemenis had died and 17 were injured in fighting that broke out during a demonstration in the southern city. In an unrelated meeting on January 14, the son of late Parliament speaker Sheikh Abdullah al-Ahmar told POLOFF that Yemen needs a southern president in order to ensure national unity. While our GPC interlocutor is known for his willingness to criticize his government and his party, his observations are both apt and insightful. End Summary.

¶2. (S) In a January 13 meeting with the Ambassador, Mohamed Abulahoum, head of the Foreign Relations Committee of the ruling General People's Congress (GPC) expressed doubts about the ROYG's handling of demonstrations that were ongoing in Aden specifically and political unrest in the South in general. "I don't think that we handled it (that day's demonstration) well," said Abulahoum. "We should just open Aden and let them go in," he added, criticizing the security forces' standard tactic of trying to keep people from traveling into the city of Aden when a demonstration is planned. Witnesses told emboff that Yemen security forces were posted at each major intersection in the Seira, Mualla, Tawahi and Khor Maksr districts on January 13 and that the Aden International Airport was closed all day as well (septel).

¶3. (S) Independent press reports indicate that two were killed and 16 were wounded (including 7 police officers) in fighting related to the demonstrations which were organized to commemorate the civil unrest among factions of the Yemen Socialist Party (YSP) in the mid-1980s. Violence reportedly ensued when security forces attempted to steer an estimated 3000 demonstrators away from the Sheik Othman district of Aden into a stadium in the neighboring Mansoura District. Both official press reports and witnesses on the ground blame "hooligans" for entering the demonstration and inciting the violence. The existence of these hooligans or their sympathies (pro-demonstrator or pro-government) have not been independently confirmed.

¶4. (C) The events of January 13, while significant, are not qualitatively different than the demonstrations that have gone on in the south for the last few months. Abulahoum also raised doubts about the ROYG's handling of this larger discontent. "Our problem," he said, "is that we never check what happened yesterday. We did not handle the South right before and we are not handling it well now." He went on to add that he felt the ROYG should have let the opposition

Joint Meeting Parties (JMP) take a more active role. "We should let them be the front men," he said. Another embassy contact recently expressed a novel idea springing from concern of the ROYG's handling of Southern discontent. Hamid al-Ahmar, son of the late Speaker of Parliament and Sheikh of Sheikhs Abdulallah al-Ahmar, told POLOFF on January 14 that for the sake of national unity, the next president of Yemen or even the next two presidents should be southerners.

¶5. (C) The Ambassador asked Abulahoum what he thought the demonstrators in the South were trying to achieve. "On the surface," he responded, "they want separation (of the South from the rest of Yemen), but if they see real reform, they will come back." Separation is a threat that they use," he concluded.

Comment

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¶6. (C) Abulahoum is a direct man and has always been willing to frankly criticize the ROYG and his own party. His criticisms are therefore not as surprising as they might otherwise be. They are, however, both apt and insightful. Protests have been ongoing for several months and the ROYG has had not real success in ameliorating the pervasive sense of southern disenfranchisement. End Comment.  
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